

FREDERICK COUNTY HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

July 26, 2016

MINUTES

I. The meeting was called to order.

II. The following members were present: Mari Lee, David Kaye, Lisa Clark, Francisco Alves, Kavonte' Duckett, Adam Book, Marguerite Vacca-Kaye, Debbie Peeks and Annette Breiling.

Liaison members Jessica Fitzwater and Jet Reid were also present.

III. Other persons present were Lee Wisner, Roger Sobkowiak, FPD Chief Hargis, Captain Grossman, Captain Summers and Lt. Tokarz.

IV. All present were invited to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance if they wished. At the conclusion, Annette Breiling asked about saying an alternative version of the pledge at future meetings. Mari Lee said that she would look into it and get back to her, probably at the August meeting.

V. The June 2016 HRC meeting minutes were reviewed and approved with two corrections. The first was to revise the spelling of an acronym in section IV to show it as "LGBTQIA." The second was to revise section XI to show that a majority of members with one abstention had voted to approve the resolution and send it to the County Council, rather than a unanimous vote as had been written.

VI. In light of the many tragic events that have recently occurred across the US, FPD Chief Hargis described a number of topics and events concerning protests, calls for service and community involvement in Frederick. Chief Hargis said that there had been a couple of police brutality protests in Frederick in recent weeks, and that everything had been peaceful with no arrests. Before the second protest FPD met with the organizers and provided traffic control when some people moved into the street.

Chief Hargis said that on Sunday, July 24 there had been a Black Lives Matter rally and a Blue Lives Matter rally in the same park at the same time. The park was divided in half. On-duty FPD officers were instructed to limit their interactions with the Blue Lives Matter group in order to remain impartial. The events lasted about one hour and fifteen minutes and were peaceful with no arrests.

Chief Hargis said that since the murder of police officers in Dallas, FPD is dispatching officers in pairs for safety reasons. It may take a little longer in some cases to respond, but there have been no complaints. Chief Hargis said that all calls and responses are being closely monitored, but there have been no significant changes in the levels or types of calls. Chief Hargis said that FPD will be participating in the upcoming HRC forum on August 10, and is also getting requests to talk to other groups about the recent incidents involving police officers elsewhere.

Chief Hargis said that National Night Out is August 2 and FPD is looking at this as another opportunity to interact with citizens and discuss their concerns. He said that FPD is getting good support in the community, and that people come up to him to express their appreciation for what FPD officers are doing.

Kavonte' Duckett asked if any businesses had complained about income lost due to the protests and marches. Chief Hargis said that some businesses asked before the first protest whether they should close, but FPD did not advise them to. He has not received any complaints about lost income from any of the downtown merchants.

Kavonte' Duckett asked why the park was sectioned off on Sunday, because the Black Lives Matter group would have liked to come over and listen to the Blue Lives Matter group. Chief Hargis said that the Blue Lives Matter organizers did request on Facebook that the Black Lives Matter group cooperate, but the response was not positive, so FPD did not try to intervene.

Jessica Fitzwater said that the County Sheriff's Office has a citizens' advisory group, and wondered what FPD had. Chief Hargis said that he has a Chief's Forum group, which was organized by first sending invitations to the NACs and then recruiting interested members. He said that he's actively bringing everyone in this group up to speed on all areas of police operations.

Jessica Fitzwater complimented Chief Hargis for the great strides FPD has made in community policing, and asked if it provides any racial bias training. Chief Hargis said that bias training is provided to all recruits at the FPD police academy, and that he's considering bringing in an implicit bias training expert to give training to the entire police force. Roger Sobkowiak suggested that the FPD advisory group should go through the bias training.

Captain Grossman noted that the FPD has written operating procedures for protests and rallies, which require reaching out to organizers to help protect their First Amendment rights and to explain all of the legal requirements that apply. Michelle Bowman is now the FPD Public Information Officer and Outreach Coordinator, and handles these responsibilities.

Lt. Tokarz said that FPD has had a number of experienced police officers apply for and accept employment recently, mainly from the Baltimore area. He said there is a great deal of diversity among these lateral transfer applicants. Lt. Tokarz said that all new recruits are sent out into the community when they complete the police academy. They have surveys with questions they ask the people they meet. The emphasis of these questions is how the citizens believe that FPD officers can work better with members of the community.

Annette Breiling said that she will be leading a discussion group at the Urbana library on October 19 regarding the book, *All American Boys*. She suggested that representatives from FPD and the African-American community be included in this discussion group. Chief Hargis said that Captain Grossman would participate, and Kavonte' Duckett also agreed to participate.

VII. Mari Lee reported that she intends to appoint new chairs and members to the HRC's three standing committees. It was reported that with the beginning of a new fiscal year, the HRC has \$4,770 in funds on hand.

VIII. Members were reminded that the HRC's annual retreat will take place on Saturday, August 27, from 9 am until noon at the Public Safety Training Facility. Topics of discussion will include goals for the new year and training on the procedures for dealing with appeals in discrimination cases after HRD does an investigation and prepares a written determination.

IX. There was substantial discussion about the format and planning for the upcoming public forum entitled *Community Policing from the Community Perspective*. The participants were identified, and there was discussion about adding others. A suggestion was made that it be broadcast on cable TV and perhaps taped. The feeling was that this could be considered for future forums and activities, but would probably involve more work and costs. Finally, a number of additional questions for panel members were proposed and discussed.

X. Jessica Fitzwater encouraged everyone to review information that had gone out recently about the 2016 Community Health Assessment that is underway at the County Health Department. Input from all community members is being sought, and will conclude with an all-day priority setting meeting on September 13 at FCC, for which advance registration is required.

Jet Reid, the newly appointed liaison from the Frederick County Public Schools was introduced and welcomed. Mr. Wilson said he was excited to be working with the HRC.

Kavonte' Duckett said that the Frederick County NAACP is being revamped so it can become functional again, but in order to do so, 50 members are required. He encouraged all HRC members to consider sending in the membership fee of \$30 so this very worthy organization can once again function in Frederick County.

XI. The meeting was adjourned.